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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Training prepares Soldiers for deployment**

By Spc. Charles Butler, Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR)

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – Facing the challenges of a year-long tour of duty in Iraq, Soldiers from Bravo Battery have been actively preparing situations they will encounter in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 186 member unit is scheduled to deploy in late October. That has Soldiers extensively training on convoy security operations and basic war-time skills.

“I am extremely proud of the men that are going with us,” 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Ty Holt of Volga said. “They have jelled nicely together and put forth a lot of effort into the training.”

There are tasks that are required of a unit before they are able to deploy. The Soldiers of B Battery spent their two-week annual training (AT) in June learning the basics of how to operate in Iraq. The training included briefings on cultural awareness, the history of Iraq, rules of engagement and how to interact with the media. They went through classes on weapons familiarization, communication with a radio and basic vehicle maintenance.

Soldiers trained on advanced computer simulators, focusing on situational awareness on foot and in vehicles. The EST2000 is a big interactive video game that uses computer and real life images for Soldiers to react to threats using actual modified weapons for more realistic training.

For vehicle training, Soldiers utilized the virtual convoy trainer (VCOT). Soldiers strap into a virtual game in groups of three, a driver, truck commander and a gunner, to make up a gun truck. Gun trucks are combined with two or three others to make up a convoy. This simulates driving down the streets of Iraq and reacting to different scenarios, similar to the mission B Battery is slated for.

Staff Sgt. Ben Guenther of Yankton, who has volunteered to go back to Iraq for the second time, said he thinks B Battery is well prepared for deployment.

“AT was awesome this year,” Guenther said, a truck commander. “We did theater

specific training. We spent our time wisely on training that will do us some good in Iraq.”

Additionally the unit took the Combat Lifesaver Course. Soldiers spent a great deal of time training in medical tasks, ranging from simple first aid such as tying splints for broken bones and placing pressure dressings on open wounds to the more challenging task of every Soldier giving another Soldier an intravenous therapy (IV). According to Holt, about 97 percent of the unit received certification, an outstanding certification rate.

Spc. Josh Blindert, a mechanic for the unit and from Salem, said the Combat Lifesaver Course was great training and very beneficial to the mission he and his fellow Soldiers are about to embark.

“I really learned some useful information that will help save lives,” Blindert said.

Maj. Kory Knight of Hartford, commander of B Battery, said the task of getting his group ready to deploy has been challenging. B Battery, which is based out of the Salem and Sioux Falls area, had many Soldiers join Charlie Battery for its 2005 deployment. Others had to be brought in from units around the state to fill the ranks.

“It has been a real challenge to compile all of these men and equipment into one unit, but we have accomplished that and we have a great group of professional Soldiers,” Knight said.

“The guys setting up the training schedule have done a great job and are the reason we are moving along so efficiently,” Guenther said. “It has been nice to have six months to prepare for our deployment, for training reasons as well as for guys to get their families ready for their departure.”

The activation ceremony for B Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 147<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, will be held in late October at the Sioux Falls Arena. An exact date will be announced soon. B Battery will then leave for their mobilization station at Camp Shelby, Miss., to conduct further training prior to heading overseas.